

House Bill 597

By: Representative Houston of the 170<sup>th</sup>

A BILL TO BE ENTITLED  
AN ACT

1 To provide a new charter for the City of Sparks, Georgia; to provide for incorporation,  
2 boundaries, and powers of the city; to provide for general powers and limitations on powers;  
3 to provide for a governing authority of such city and the powers, duties, authority, election,  
4 terms, method of filling vacancies, compensation, expenses, qualifications, and prohibitions  
5 relative to members of such governing authority; to provide for inquiries and investigations;  
6 to provide for organization and procedures; to provide for ordinances; to provide for codes;  
7 to provide for the office of mayor and certain duties and powers relative to the office of  
8 mayor; to provide for administrative responsibilities; to provide for boards, commissions, and  
9 authorities; to provide for a city manager, a city attorney, a city clerk, and other personnel;  
10 to provide for a municipal court and the judge or judges thereof; to provide for practices and  
11 procedures; to provide for ethics and disclosures; to provide for taxation, licenses, and fees;  
12 to provide for franchises, service charges, and assessments; to provide for bonded and other  
13 indebtedness; to provide for accounting and budgeting; to provide for purchases; to provide  
14 for bonds for officials; to provide for other matters relative to the foregoing; to provide for  
15 related matters; to repeal a specific law; to repeal conflicting laws; and for other purposes.

16 BE IT ENACTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF GEORGIA:

17 ARTICLE I  
18 INCORPORATION, POWERS, AND NAME  
19 SECTION 1.10.  
20 Name.

21 The city and inhabitants thereof are reincorporated by the enactment of this charter and are  
22 hereby constituted and declared a body politic and corporate under the name and style  
23 Sparks, Georgia, and by that name shall have perpetual succession.

24

**SECTION 1.11.**

25

## Corporate boundaries.

26 (a) The boundaries of this city shall be those existing on the effective date of the adoption  
27 of this charter with such alterations as may be made from time to time in the manner  
28 provided by law. The boundaries of this city at all times shall be shown on a map, a written  
29 description, or any combination thereof, to be retained permanently in the office of the city  
30 clerk and to be designated, as the case may be: "Official Map (or Description) of the  
31 corporate limits of the City of Sparks, Georgia." Photographic, typed, or other copies of  
32 such map or description certified by the city clerk shall be admitted as evidence in all  
33 courts and shall have the same force and effect as with the original map or description.  
34 (b) The city council may provide for the redrawing of any such map by ordinance to reflect  
35 lawful changes in the corporate boundaries. A redrawn map shall supersede for all  
36 purposes the entire map or maps which it is designated to replace.

37

**SECTION 1.12.**

38

## Powers and construction.

39 (a) This city shall have all powers possible for a city to have under the present or future  
40 Constitution and laws of this state as fully and completely as though they were specifically  
41 enumerated in this charter. This city shall have all the powers of self-government not  
42 otherwise prohibited by this charter or by general law.  
43 (b) The powers of this city shall be construed liberally in favor of the city. The specific  
44 mention or failure to mention particular powers shall not be construed as limiting in any  
45 way the powers of this city.

46

**SECTION 1.13.**

47

## Examples of powers.

48 (a) Air and water pollution. To regulate the emission of smoke or other exhaust which  
49 pollutes the air and to prevent the pollution of natural streams or bodies of water within the  
50 corporate limits of the city;  
51 (b) Animal regulations. To regulate and license or to prohibit the keeping or running at  
52 large of animals and fowl and to provide for the impoundment of same if in violation of  
53 any ordinance or lawful order; to provide for the disposition by sale, gift, or humane  
54 destruction of animals and fowl when not redeemed as provided by ordinance; and to  
55 provide punishment for violation of ordinances enacted under this charter;

56 (c) Appropriations and expenditures. To make appropriations for the support of the  
57 government of the city; to authorize the expenditure of money for any purposes authorized  
58 by this charter and for any purpose for which a municipality is authorized by the laws of  
59 the state of Georgia; and to provide for the payment of expenses of the city;

60 (d) Building regulation. To regulate and to license the erection and construction of  
61 buildings and all other structures; to adopt building, housing, plumbing, electrical, gas, and  
62 heating and air conditioning codes; and to regulate all housing and building trades;

63 (e) Business regulation and taxation. To levy and to provide for collection of license fees  
64 and taxes on privileges, occupations, trades, and professions as authorized by Title 48 of  
65 the O.C.G.A. or such other applicable laws as are or may hereafter be enacted; to license  
66 and regulate the same; to provide for the manner and method of payment of such licenses  
67 and taxes; and to revoke such licenses after due process for failure to pay any city taxes or  
68 fees;

69 (f) Contracts. To enter into contracts and agreements with other governmental entities and  
70 with private persons, firms, and corporations;

71 (g) Emergencies. To establish procedures for determining and proclaiming that an  
72 emergency situation exists within or outside the city and to make and carry out all  
73 reasonable provisions deemed necessary to deal with or meet such an emergency for the  
74 protection, safety, health, or well-being of the citizens of the city;

75 (h) Eminent domain. To acquire, construct, operate, and maintain public ways, parks,  
76 public grounds, cemeteries, markets, market houses, public buildings, libraries, sewers,  
77 drains, sewage treatment, waterworks, electrical systems, gas systems, airports, hospitals,  
78 and charitable, educational, recreational, sport, curative, corrective, detentional, penal, and  
79 medical institutions, agencies, and facilities, and any other public improvements inside or  
80 outside the city and to regulate the use thereof and, for such purposes, property may be  
81 condemned utilizing procedures enumerated in Title 22 or Title 32 of the O.C.G.A. or such  
82 other applicable laws as are now or may hereafter be enacted;

83 (i) Environmental protection. To protect and preserve the natural resources, environment,  
84 and vital areas of the city, region, or state through the preservation and improvement of air  
85 quality, the restoration and maintenance of water resources, the control of erosion and  
86 sedimentation, the management of solid and hazardous waste, and other necessary actions  
87 for the protection of the environment;

88 (j) Fire regulations. To fix and establish fire districts and from time to time to extend,  
89 enlarge, or restrict the same; to prescribe fire safety regulations not inconsistent with  
90 general law, relating to both fire prevention and detection and to fire fighting; and to  
91 prescribe penalties and punishment for violations thereof;

92 (k) Garbage fees. To levy, fix, assess, and collect a garbage, refuse, rubbish, solid waste, and trash collection and disposal and other sanitary service charge, tax, or fee for such services as may be necessary in the operation of the city from all individuals, firms, and corporations residing in or doing business in the city benefiting from such services; to enforce the payment of such charges, taxes, or fees; and to provide for the manner and method of collection of such service charges; and to provide for the separate collection of glass, tin, aluminum, cardboard, paper, and other recyclable materials and to provide for the sale of such items;

100 (l) General health, safety, and welfare. To define, regulate, and prohibit any act, practice, conduct, or use of property, which is detrimental to the health, sanitation, cleanliness, welfare, and safety of the inhabitants of the city and to provide for the enforcement of such standards;

104 (m) Gifts. To accept or refuse gifts, donations, bequests, or grants from any source for any purpose related to powers and duties of the city and the general welfare of its citizens, on such terms and conditions as the donor or grantor may impose;

107 (n) Health and sanitation. To prescribe standards of health and sanitation and to provide for the enforcement of such standards;

109 (o) Jail sentences. To provide that persons given jail sentences in the municipal court may work out such sentences in any public works or on the streets, roads, drains, and squares or other public property in the city; to provide for commitment of such persons to any jail; or to provide for commitment of such persons to any county work camp or county jail by agreement with the appropriate county officials;

114 (p) Motor vehicles. To regulate the operation of motor vehicles and exercise control over all traffic, including parking upon or across the streets, roads, alleys, and walkways of the city;

117 (q) Municipal agencies and delegation of power. To create, alter, or abolish departments, boards, offices, commissions, and agencies of the city and to confer upon such agencies the necessary and appropriate authority for carrying out all the powers conferred upon or delegated to the same;

121 (r) Municipal debts. To appropriate and borrow money for the payment of debts of the city and to issue bonds for the purpose of raising revenue to carry out any project, program, or venue authorized by this charter or the laws of the State of Georgia;

124 (s) Municipal property ownership. To acquire, dispose of, and hold in trust or otherwise any real, personal, or mixed property, in fee simple or lesser interest, inside or outside the property limits of the city;

127 (t) Municipal property protection. To provide for the preservation and protection of  
128 property and equipment of the city and the administration and use of same by the public;  
129 and to prescribe penalties and punishment for violations thereof;

130 (u) Municipal utilities. To acquire, lease, construct, operate, maintain, sell, and dispose  
131 of public utilities, including, but not limited to, a system of waterworks, sewers and drains,  
132 sewage disposal, gas works, electric light plants, cable television and other  
133 telecommunications, transportation facilities, public airports, and any other public utility;  
134 and to fix the taxes, charges, rates, fares, fees, assessments, regulations, and penalties and  
135 to provide for the withdrawal of service for refusal or failure to pay the same;

136 (v) Telecommunications. To acquire, own, hold, lease, sell, resell, build, maintain,  
137 operate, and contract with respect to a telecommunications system network in order to  
138 provide telecommunications services and other similar services, including cable television  
139 services (CATV) and internet services; to establish and charge rates, fees, tolls, and charges  
140 for the services, facilities, or commodities furnished or made available by such  
141 undertaking; to interconnect its system or services or both with the systems or services of  
142 consumers and other providers; to use telecommunications to respond to community needs,  
143 encourage the development of information-based organizations in the City of Sparks,  
144 Georgia, and to finance from time to time any such telecommunications systems through  
145 the issuance of revenue bonds as then permitted by the Constitution and laws of the State  
146 of Georgia; and to make any contract with respect to and furnish the services of any said  
147 systems to consumers within or outside the corporate limits of the city;

148 (w) Nuisance. To define a nuisance and provide for its abatement whether on public or  
149 private property;

150 (x) Penalties. To provide penalties for violation of any ordinance adopted pursuant to the  
151 authority of this charter and the laws of the State of Georgia;

152 (y) Planning and zoning. To provide comprehensive city planning for development by  
153 zoning; and to provide subdivision regulation and the like as the city council deems  
154 necessary and reasonable to ensure a safe, healthy, and aesthetically pleasing community;

155 (z) Police and fire protection. To exercise the power of arrest through duly appointed  
156 police officers and to establish, operate, or contract for a police and a firefighting agency;

157 (aa) Public hazards; removal. To provide for the destruction and removal of any building  
158 or other structure which is or may become dangerous or detrimental to the public;

159 (bb) Public improvements. To provide for the acquisition, construction, building,  
160 operation, and maintenance of public ways, parks and playgrounds, recreational facilities,  
161 cemeteries, markets and market houses, public buildings, libraries, public housing, airports,  
162 hospitals, terminals, docks, parking facilities, or charitable, cultural, educational,  
163 recreational, conservation, sports, curative, corrective, detention, penal, and medical

164 institutions, agencies, and facilities; and to provide any other public improvements, inside  
165 or outside the corporate limits of the city; to regulate the use of public improvements; and,  
166 for such purposes, property may be acquired by condemnation under Title 22 or Title 32  
167 of the O.C.G.A. or such other applicable laws as are now or may hereafter be enacted;

168 (cc) Public peace. To provide for the prevention and punishment of drunkenness, riots,  
169 and public disturbances;

170 (dd) Public transportation. To organize and operate or contract for such public  
171 transportation systems as are deemed beneficial;

172 (ee) Public utilities and services. To grant franchises or make contracts for public utilities  
173 and public services and to prescribe the rates, fares, regulations, and standards and  
174 conditions of service applicable to the service to be provided by the franchise grantee or  
175 contractor, insofar as not in conflict with valid regulations of the Georgia Public Service  
176 Commission;

177 (ff) Regulation of roadside areas. To prohibit or regulate and control the erection,  
178 removal, and maintenance of signs, billboards, trees, shrubs, fences, buildings, and any and  
179 all other structures or obstructions upon or adjacent to the rights of way of streets and roads  
180 or within view thereof, within or abutting the corporate limits of the city; and to prescribe  
181 penalties and punishment for violation of such ordinances;

182 (gg) Retirement. To provide and maintain a retirement plan for employees of the city;

183 (hh) Roadways. To lay out, open, extend, widen, narrow, establish or change the grade  
184 of, abandon or close, construct, pave, curb, gutter, adorn with shade trees, or otherwise  
185 improve, maintain, repair, clean, prevent erosion of, and light the roads, alleys, and  
186 walkways within the corporate limits of the city; and to grant franchises and rights of way  
187 throughout the streets and roads and over the bridges and viaducts for the use of public  
188 utilities; and to require real estate owners to repair and maintain in a safe condition the  
189 sidewalks adjoining their lots or lands and to impose penalties for failure to do so;

190 (ii) Sewer fees. To levy a fee, charge, or sewer tax as necessary to assure the acquiring,  
191 constructing, equipping, operating, maintaining, and extending of a sewage disposal plant  
192 and sewerage system and to levy on those to whom sewers and sewerage systems are made  
193 available a sewer service fee, charge, or sewer tax for the availability or use of the sewers;  
194 to provide for the manner and method of collecting such service charges and for enforcing  
195 payment of the same; and to charge, impose, and collect a sewer connection fee or fees to  
196 those connected with the system;

197 (jj) Special areas of public regulation. To regulate or prohibit junk dealers, pawn shops,  
198 the manufacture, sale or transportation of intoxicating liquors or alcoholic beverages, and  
199 the use and sale of firearms; to regulate the transportation, storage, and use of combustible,  
200 explosive, and inflammable materials, the use of lighting and heating equipment, and any

201 other business or situation which may be dangerous to persons or property; to regulate and  
202 control the conduct of peddlers and itinerant traders, theatrical performers, exhibitors, and  
203 shows of any kind, by taxation or otherwise; and to license, tax, regulate, or prohibit  
204 professional fortunetelling, palmistry, adult bookstores, and massage parlors;

205 (kk) Special assessments. To levy and provide for the collection of special assessments  
206 to cover the costs for any public improvements;

207 (ll) Taxes: ad valorem. To the extent permitted by general law, to levy and provide for  
208 assessment, valuation, revaluation, and collection of taxes on all property subject to  
209 taxation;

210 (mm) Taxes: other. To levy and collect such other taxes as may be allowed now or in the  
211 future by law;

212 (nn) Taxicabs. To regulate and license vehicles operated for hire in the city; to limit the  
213 number of such vehicles; to require the operators thereof to be licensed; to require public  
214 liability insurance on such vehicles in the amounts to be prescribed by ordinance; and to  
215 regulate the parking of such vehicles;

216 (oo) Urban redevelopment. To organize and operate an urban redevelopment program;  
217 and

218 (pp) Other powers. To exercise and enjoy all other powers, functions, rights, privileges,  
219 and immunities necessary or desirable to promote or protect the safety, health, peace,  
220 security, good order, comfort, convenience, or general welfare of the city and its  
221 inhabitants; and to exercise all implied powers necessary to execute all powers granted in  
222 this charter as fully and completely as if such powers were fully stated in this charter; and  
223 to exercise all powers now or in the future authorized to be exercised by other municipal  
224 governments under other laws of the State of Georgia; and no listing of particular powers  
225 in this charter shall be held to be exclusive of others, nor restrictive of general words and  
226 phrases granting powers, but shall be held to be in addition to such powers unless expressly  
227 prohibited to municipalities under the Constitution or applicable laws of the State of  
228 Georgia.

229 **SECTION 1.14.**

230 Exercise of powers.

231 All powers, functions, rights, privileges, and immunities of the city, its officers, agencies, or  
232 employees shall be carried into execution as provided by this charter. If this charter makes  
233 no provision, such shall be carried into execution as provided by ordinance or as provided  
234 by pertinent laws of the State of Georgia.

239 The legislative authority of the government of this city, except as otherwise specifically  
240 provided in this charter, shall be vested in a city council to be composed of a mayor and six  
241 councilmembers. The city council established in this charter shall in all respects be a  
242 successor to and continuation of the city governing authority under prior law. The mayor and  
243 councilmembers shall be elected in the manner provided by this charter.

244 **SECTION 2.11.**

245 City councilmembers; terms and qualifications for office.

246 The mayor and members of the city council shall be elected to four-year staggered terms of  
247 office and shall serve until their respective successors are elected and qualified. No person  
248 shall be eligible to serve as mayor or councilmember unless:

249 (a) That person is a minimum of 21 years of age;

250 (b) That person has been a resident of the city for one year prior to the date of qualifying

251 to run for the office; and

252 (c) That person is a registered and qualified voter of the city at the time of qualifying for

253 office.

254 **SECTION 2.12.**

255 Vacancy; filling of vacancies; suspensions.

256 (a) Vacancies – The office of mayor or councilmember shall become vacant upon such  
257 person's failing or ceasing to reside in the city or upon the occurrence of any event  
258 specified by the Constitution, Title 45 of the O.C.G.A., or such other applicable laws as are  
259 or may be hereafter enacted.

260 (b) Filling of vacancies – A vacancy in the office of mayor or councilmember shall be  
261 filled for the remainder of the unexpired term, if any, by appointment by the city council  
262 or those members remaining if less than 12 months remain in the unexpired term, otherwise  
263 by an election as provided for in Section 5.14 of this charter and Titles 21 and 45 of the  
264 O.C.G.A. or such other laws as are or may hereafter be enacted. Appointments made  
265 hereunder shall be by majority vote of the remaining members of the city council.

266 (c) Suspension – Upon the suspension from office of mayor or councilmember in any  
267 manner authorized by the general laws of the State of Georgia, the city council or those  
268 remaining shall appoint a successor for the duration of the suspension. If the suspension  
269 becomes permanent, then the office shall become vacant and shall be filled for the  
270 remainder of the unexpired term, if any, as provided for in this charter.

271 **SECTION 2.13.**

272 Compensation and expenses.

273 The mayor and councilmembers shall receive compensation and expenses for their services  
274 as provided by ordinance.

275 **SECTION 2.14.**

276 Conflicts of interest; holding other offices.

277 (a) Elected and appointed officers of the city are trustees and servants of the residents of  
278 the city and shall act in a fiduciary capacity for the benefit of such residents.

279 (b) Conflict of interest – No elected official, appointed officer, or employee of the city or  
280 any agency or political entity to which this charter applies shall knowingly:

281 (1) Engage in any business or transaction or have a financial or other personal interest,  
282 direct or indirect, which is incompatible with the proper discharge of that person's official  
283 duties or which would tend to impair the independence of that person's judgment or  
284 action in the performance of that person's official duties;

285 (2) Engage in or accept private employment or render services for private interest when  
286 such employment or service is incompatible with the proper discharge of that person's  
287 official duties or would tend to impair the independence of that person's judgment or  
288 action in the performance of that person's official duties;

289 (3) Disclose confidential information, including information obtained at meetings which  
290 are closed pursuant to Chapter 14 of Title 50 of the O.C.G.A., concerning the property,  
291 government, or affairs of the governmental body by which that person is engaged without  
292 proper legal authorization or use such information to advance the financial or other  
293 private interest of that person or others;

294 (4) Accept any valuable gift, whether in the form of service, loan, thing, or promise,  
295 from any person, firm, or corporation which to that person's knowledge is interested,  
296 directly or indirectly, in any manner whatsoever, in business dealings with the  
297 governmental body by which that person is engaged; provided, however, that an elected

298 official who is a candidate for public office may accept campaign contributions and  
299 services in connection with any such campaign;

300 (5) Represent other private interests in any action or proceeding against this city or any  
301 portion of its government; or

302 (6) Vote or otherwise participate in the negotiation or in the making of any contract with  
303 any business or entity in which that person has a financial interest;

304 (c) Disclosure – Any elected official, appointed officer, or employee who shall have any  
305 financial interest, directly or indirectly, in any contract or matter pending before or within  
306 any department of the city shall disclose such interest to the city council. The mayor or any  
307 councilmember who has an interest in any matter pending before the city council shall  
308 disclose such private interest and such disclosure shall be entered on the records of the city  
309 council, and that person shall disqualify himself or herself from participating in any  
310 decision or vote relating thereto. Any elected official, appointed officer, or employee of  
311 any agency or political entity to which this charter applies who shall have any financial  
312 interest, directly or indirectly, in any contract or matter pending before or within such  
313 entity shall disclose such private interest to the governing body of such agency or entity;

314 (d) Use of public property – No elected official, appointed officer, or employee of the city  
315 or any agency or entity to which this charter applies shall use property owned by such  
316 governmental entity for personal benefit, convenience, or profit except in accordance with  
317 policies promulgated by the city council or the governing body of such agency or entity;

318 (e) Contracts voidable and rescindable – Any violation of this section which occurs with  
319 the knowledge, express or implied, of a party to a contract or sale shall render such contract  
320 or sale voidable at the option of the city council;

321 (f) Ineligibility of elected official – Except where authorized by law, neither the mayor nor  
322 any councilmember shall hold any other elective or compensated appointive office in the  
323 city or otherwise be employed by said government or any agency thereof during the term  
324 for which that person was elected. No former mayor or councilmember shall hold any  
325 compensated appointive office in the city until one year after the expiration of the term for  
326 which that person was elected;

327 (g) Political activities of certain officers and employees – No appointed officer and no  
328 employee of the city shall continue in such employment upon qualifying as a candidate for  
329 nomination or election to any public office. No employee of the city shall continue in such  
330 employment upon election to any public office in this city of any other public office which  
331 is inconsistent, incompatible, or in conflict with the duties of the city employee. Such  
332 determination shall be made by the mayor and the city council either immediately upon  
333 election or at any time such conflict may arise;

334 (h) Penalties for violation –

335 (1) Any city officer or employee who knowingly conceals such financial interest or  
336 knowingly violates any of the requirements of this section shall be guilty of malfeasance  
337 in office or position and shall be deemed to have forfeited that person's office or position.

338 (2) Any officer or employee of the city who shall forfeit that person's office or position  
339 as described in paragraph (1) of this subsection shall be ineligible for appointment or  
340 election to or employment in a position in the city government for a period of three years  
341 hereafter.

342 **SECTION 2.15.**

343 Inquiries and investigations.

344 Following the adoption of an authorizing resolution, the city council may make inquiries and  
345 investigations into the affairs of the city and conduct of any department, office, or agency  
346 thereof and for this purpose may subpoena witnesses, administer oaths, take testimony, and  
347 require the production of evidence. Any person who fails or refuses to obey a lawful order  
348 issued in the exercise of these powers by the city council shall be punished as may be  
349 provided by ordinance.

350 **SECTION 2.16.**

351 General power and authority of the city council.

352 (a) Except as otherwise provided by law or this charter, the city council shall be vested  
353 with all the powers of government of this city.

354 (b) In addition to all other powers conferred upon it by law, the city council shall have the  
355 authority to adopt and provide for the execution of such ordinances, resolutions, rules, and  
356 regulations, not inconsistent with this charter and the Constitution and the laws of the State  
357 of Georgia, which it shall deem necessary, expedient, or helpful for the peace, good order,  
358 protection of life and property, health, welfare, sanitation, comfort, convenience,  
359 prosperity, or well-being of the inhabitants of the City of Sparks and may enforce such  
360 ordinances by imposing penalties for violation thereof.

361 **SECTION 2.17.**

362 Organizational meetings.

363 The city council shall hold an organizational meeting on the second Monday in January  
364 following the election of city officials. The meeting shall be called to order by the city clerk

365 and the oath of office shall be administered by an officer authorised to administer oaths to  
366 the newly elected members as follows:

367 "I do solemnly (swear)(affirm) that I will faithfully perform the duties of  
368 (mayor)(councilmember) of this city and that I will support and defend the charter thereof  
369 as well as the Constitution and laws of the State of Georgia and the United States of  
370 America."

371 **SECTION 2.18.**

372 Meetings.

373 (a) The city council shall hold regular meetings at such times and places as prescribed by  
374 ordinance.

375 (b) Special meetings of the city council may be held on call of the mayor or three members  
376 of the city council. Notice of such special meeting shall be served on all other members  
377 personally, or by telephone personally, at least twenty-four hours in advance of the  
378 meeting. Such notice to councilmembers shall not be required if the mayor and all  
379 councilmembers are present when the special meeting is called. Such notice of any special  
380 meeting may be waived by a councilmember in writing before or after such a meeting and  
381 attendance at the meeting shall also constitute a waiver of notice on any business transacted  
382 in such councilmember's presence. Only the business stated in the call may be transacted  
383 at the special meeting.

384 (c) All meetings of the city council shall be public to the extent required by law and notice  
385 to the public of special meetings shall be made as fully as is reasonably possible as  
386 provided by Code Section 50-14-1 of the O.C.G.A. or other such applicable laws as are or  
387 may hereafter be enacted.

388 **SECTION 2.19.**

389 Rules of procedure.

390 (a) The city council shall adopt its rules of procedure and order of business consistent with  
391 the provisions of this charter and shall provide for keeping of a journal of its proceedings,  
392 which shall be a public record.

393 (b) All committees and committee chairpersons and officers of the city council shall be  
394 appointed by the mayor and shall serve at the pleasure of the city council.

395

**SECTION 2.20.**

396

Quorum; voting.

397 (a) Four councilmembers shall constitute a quorum and shall be authorized to transact  
398 business of the city council. Voting on the adoption of ordinances shall be by voice vote  
399 and the vote shall be recorded in the journal, but councilmembers shall have the right to  
400 request a roll-call vote and such vote shall be recorded in the journal. Except as otherwise  
401 provided in this charter, the affirmative vote of four councilmembers shall be required for  
402 the adoption of any ordinance, resolution, or motion.

403 (b) No member of the city council shall abstain from voting on any matter properly  
404 brought before the council for official action except when such councilmember has a  
405 conflict of interest which is disclosed orally prior to or at the meeting and made a part of  
406 the minutes. Any member of the city council present and eligible to vote on a matter and  
407 refusing to do so for any reason other than a properly disclosed and recorded conflict of  
408 interest shall be deemed to have acquiesced or concurred with the members of the majority  
409 who did vote on the question involved.

410 (c) In the case of a tie vote by councilmembers, the mayor shall cast the deciding vote.

411

**SECTION 2.21.**

412

Ordinance form; procedures.

413 (a) Every proposed ordinance should be introduced in writing and in the form required for  
414 final adoption. No ordinance shall contain a subject which is not expressed in its title. The  
415 enacting clause shall be "It is hereby ordained by the governing authority of the City of  
416 Sparks..." and every ordinance shall so begin.

417 (b) An ordinance may be introduced by any councilmember and be read at a regular,  
418 special, or work meeting of the city council where an agenda applies. Ordinances shall be  
419 considered and adopted or rejected by the city council in accordance with the rules which  
420 it shall establish; provided, however, an ordinance shall not be adopted the same day it is  
421 introduced, except for emergency ordinances provided for in Section 2.23 of this charter.  
422 Upon introduction of any ordinance, the city clerk shall as soon as possible distribute a  
423 copy to the mayor and each councilmember and shall file a reasonable number of copies  
424 in the office of the clerk and at such other public places as the city council may designate.

425

**SECTION 2.22.**

426

Action requiring an ordinance.

427 Acts of the city council which have the force and effect of law shall be enacted by ordinance.

428

**SECTION 2.23.**

429

Emergencies.

430 (a) To meet a public emergency affecting life, health, property, or public peace, the city  
431 council may convene on call of the mayor or three councilmembers and may promptly  
432 adopt an emergency ordinance, but such ordinance may not levy taxes; grant, renew, or  
433 extend a franchise; regulate the rate charged by any public utility for its services; or  
434 authorize the borrowing of money except for loans to be repaid within thirty days. An  
435 emergency ordinance shall be introduced in the form prescribed for ordinances generally,  
436 except that it shall be plainly designated as an emergency ordinance and shall contain, after  
437 the enacting clause, a declaration stating that an emergency exists and describing the  
438 emergency in clear and specific terms. An emergency ordinance may be adopted, with or  
439 without amendment, or rejected at the meeting at which it is introduced, but the affirmative  
440 vote of at least four councilmembers shall be required for adoption. It shall become  
441 effective upon adoption or at such later time as it may specify. Every emergency ordinance  
442 shall automatically stand repealed thirty days following the date upon which it was  
443 adopted, but this shall not prevent reenactment of the ordinance in the manner specified in  
444 this section if the emergency continues to exist. An emergency ordinance may also be  
445 repealed by adoption of a repealing ordinance in the same manner specified in this section  
446 for adoption of emergency ordinances.

447 (b) Such meetings shall be open to the public to the extent required by law and notice to  
448 the public of emergency meetings shall be made as fully as is reasonably possible in  
449 accordance with Code Section 50-14-1 of the O.C.G.A. or such other applicable laws as  
450 are or may hereafter be enacted.

451

**SECTION 2.24.**

452

Codes of technical regulations.

453 (a) The city council may adopt any standard code of technical regulations by reference  
454 thereto in adopting an ordinance. The procedure and requirements governing such  
455 adopting ordinance shall be as prescribed for ordinances generally except that:

456 (1) The requirements of subsection (b) of Section 2.21 of this charter for distribution and  
457 filing of copies of the ordinance shall be construed to include copies of any code of  
458 technical regulations, as well as the adopting ordinance; and  
459 (2) A copy of each adopted code of technical regulations, as well as the adopting  
460 ordinance, shall be authenticated and recorded by the city clerk pursuant to Section 2.25  
461 of this charter.

462 (b) Copies of any adopted code of technical regulations shall be made available by the city  
463 clerk for inspection by the public.

464 **SECTION 2.25.**

465 Signing; authenticating; recording; codification; printing.

466 (a) The city clerk shall authenticate by the clerk's signature and record in full in a properly  
467 indexed book kept for that purpose all ordinances adopted by the city council.

468 (b) The city council shall provide for the preparation of a general codification of all the  
469 ordinances of the city having the force and effect of law. The general codification shall be  
470 adopted by the city council by ordinance and shall be published promptly, together with  
471 all amendments thereto and such codes of technical regulations and other rules and  
472 regulations as the city council may specify. This compilation shall be known and cited  
473 officially as "The Code of the City of Sparks, Georgia." Copies of the code shall be  
474 furnished to all officers, departments, and agencies of the city and made available for  
475 purchase by the public at a reasonable price as fixed by the city council.

476 (c) The city council shall cause each ordinance and each amendment to this charter to be  
477 printed as soon as practicable following its adoption, and the printed ordinances and charter  
478 amendments shall be made available for purchase by the public at reasonable prices to be  
479 fixed by the city council. Following publication of the first code under this charter and at  
480 all times thereafter, the ordinances and charter amendments shall be printed in substantially  
481 the same style as the code currently in effect and shall be suitable in form for incorporation  
482 therein. The city council shall make such further arrangements as deemed desirable with  
483 reproduction and distribution of any current changes in or additions to codes of technical  
484 regulations and other rules and regulations included in the code.

485

**SECTION 2.26.**

486

City manager; appointment; qualifications; compensation.

487 The city council, in consultation with the mayor, may appoint a city manager for an  
488 indefinite term and shall fix the city manager's compensation. The city manager shall be  
489 appointed solely on the basis of that person's executive and administrative qualifications.

490

**SECTION 2.27.**

491

Powers and duties of the city manager.

492 The city manager, if appointed, shall be the chief executive and administrative officer of the  
493 city. The city manager shall be responsible to the city council for the administration of all  
494 city affairs placed in the city manager's charge by or under this charter. The city manager  
495 shall:

496 (a) Appoint and, when the city manager deems it necessary for the good of the city,  
497 suspend or remove all city employees and administrative officers the city manager  
498 appoints; provided, however, any department head suspended or removed by the city  
499 manager shall have the right to appeal said suspension or removal in accordance with  
500 Section 3.10 of this charter. The city manager may authorize any administrative officer  
501 who is subject to the city manager's direction and supervision to exercise these powers with  
502 respect to subordinates in that officer's department, office, or agency;

503 (b) Direct and supervise the administration of all departments, office, and agencies of the  
504 city, except as otherwise provided by this charter or by law;

505 (c) Attend all city council meetings except for closed meetings held for the purposes of  
506 deliberating on the appointment, discipline, or removal of the city manager and have the  
507 right to take part in discussion but not vote;

508 (d) See that all laws, provisions of this charter, and acts of the city council, subject to  
509 enforcement by the city manager or by officers subject to the city manager's direction and  
510 supervision, are faithfully executed;

511 (e) Prepare and submit the annual operating budget and capital budget to the city council;

512 (f) Submit to the city council and make available to the public a complete report on the  
513 finances and administrative activities of the city as of the end of each fiscal year;

514 (g) Make such other reports as the city council may require concerning the operations of  
515 the city departments, offices, and agencies subject to the city manager's direction and  
516 supervision;

517 (h) Keep the city council fully advised as to the financial condition and future needs of the  
518 city, and make such recommendations to the city council concerning the affairs of the city  
519 as the city manager deems desirable;

520 (i) Notwithstanding the powers and duties enumerated in this section, specifically excepted  
521 from the powers and duties of the city manager is the power and duty to direct, supervise,  
522 or oversee, in any fashion, the administration of the police department of the City of  
523 Sparks, which shall, in all respects, be governed by the chief of police, under the direction  
524 and supervision of the city council. The chief of police shall be appointed by the city  
525 council from time to time and shall be removed pursuant to the same procedure for removal  
526 of the city manager under Section 2.28 of this charter; and

527 (j) Perform other such duties as are specified in this charter or as may be required by the  
528 city council.

529 **SECTION 2.28.**

530 Removal of city manager.

531 The city council may remove the city manager from office or otherwise terminate the city  
532 manager's employment at will for any reason or for no reason at all, provided that the city  
533 council shall provide the city manager written notice of its decision to remove or terminate  
534 the city manager at least ten days in advance of the date set for removal or termination. The  
535 city council may suspend the city manager, with or without pay, simultaneous with its  
536 decision until the removal or termination date.

537 **SECTION 2.29.**

538 Acting city manager.

539 (a) The mayor shall, with no additional compensation, exercise the powers and perform  
540 the duties of city manager:

541 (1) At any time that a city manager is not employed by the city;

542 (2) Upon the removal of the city manager pursuant to Section 2.28 of this charter; or

543 (3) During the city manager's temporary absence or disability.

544 (b) During such period of removal or absence or disability, the city council may revoke  
545 the mayor's authority to act as city manager, upon the vote of at least four councilmembers,  
546 and appoint another officer of the city to serve as acting city manager until a new city  
547 manager is appointed or until the city manager shall return or the city manager's disability  
548 shall cease.

549

**SECTION 2.30.**

550

Council's interaction with administration.

551 Except for the purpose of inquiries and investigations under Section 2.15 of this charter,  
552 neither the city council nor its individual members shall give orders or instructions to any  
553 city officer or employee who is subject to and subordinate to the direction and supervision  
554 of the city manager. The mayor and individual councilmembers may inquire and seek  
555 information from any city officer or employee at any time, but all orders and instructions to  
556 city officers and city employees from the mayor and council shall be directed to the city  
557 manager.

558

**SECTION 2.31.**

559

Election of mayor; qualifications; forfeiture; compensation.

560 The mayor shall be elected and serve for a term of four years and until his or her successor  
561 is elected and qualified. The mayor is subject to the same qualifications of councilmembers  
562 as set forth in Section 2.11 of this charter. The mayor shall forfeit that office on the same  
563 grounds and under the same procedure as for councilmembers. The compensation of the  
564 mayor shall be established in the same manner as for councilmembers.

565

**SECTION 2.32.**

566

Powers and duties of mayor.

567 The mayor shall:

568 (a) Preside at all meetings of the city council, but the mayor shall have a vote only in the  
569 case of a tie vote by councilmembers;  
570 (b) Be the head of the city for the purpose of service of process and for ceremonial  
571 purposes, and be the official spokesperson for the city and the chief advocate of policy;  
572 (c) Have power to administer oaths and to take affidavits;  
573 (d) Sign as a matter of course on behalf of the city all written and approved contracts,  
574 ordinances, and other instruments executed by the city which by law are required to be in  
575 writing; and  
576 (e) Serve as acting city manager under the terms and conditions as specified in Section  
577 2.29 of this charter.

578

**SECTION 2.33.**

579

Mayor pro tempore.

580 By majority vote, the city council shall elect a councilmember to serve as mayor pro  
581 tempore. The mayor pro tempore shall assume the duties and powers of the mayor during  
582 the mayor's physical or mental disability, suspension from office, or absence. Any such  
583 disability or absence shall be declared by a majority vote of the city council. The mayor pro  
584 tempore shall sign all contracts and ordinances in which the mayor has a disqualifying  
585 financial interest as provided in Section 2.14 of this charter. When acting as mayor, the  
586 mayor pro tempore shall continue to have only one vote as a member of the council.

587

**ARTICLE III**

588

**ADMINISTRATIVE AFFAIRS**

589

**SECTION 3.10.**

590

Administrative and service departments.

591 (a) Except as otherwise provided in this charter, the city council by ordinance shall  
592 prescribe the functions or duties and establish, abolish, alter, consolidate, or leave vacant  
593 all nonelective offices, positions of employment, departments, and agencies of the city as  
594 necessary for the proper administration of the affairs and government of this city.

595 (b) Except as otherwise provided by this charter or by law, the directors of departments  
596 and other appointed officers of the city shall be appointed solely on the basis of their  
597 respective administrative and professional qualifications.

598 (c) All appointed officers and directors of departments shall receive such compensation  
599 as prescribed by the budget resolution or ordinance establishing position classifications and  
600 pay plans.

601 (d) There shall be a director or department head of each department or agency who shall  
602 be its principal officer. Each director or department head shall, subject to the direction and  
603 supervision of the city manager or the city council, as the case may be, be responsible for  
604 the administration and direction of the affairs and operations of that director or department  
605 head's department or agency.

606 (e) A director or department head removed or suspended by the city manager pursuant to  
607 Section 2.27 of this charter shall have the right to appeal said suspension or removal by  
608 filing with the city council an appeal, in writing, fully stating the reasons for said appeal,  
609 no later than fifteen days after the date such suspension or removal is to take effect. If the  
610 appeal is timely filed, the city council shall have fifteen days after the date of filing to  
611 consider the appeal and set a hearing, which shall be open to the public and presided over

612 by the city attorney; provided, however, the hearing shall in no event be set later than thirty  
613 days after the date such suspension or removal is to take effect. The city council shall have  
614 fifteen days following the hearing to make a final determination. Any director or  
615 department head who appeals pursuant to this section is determined to be suspended with  
616 pay.

617 **SECTION 3.11.**

618 Boards, commissions, and authorities.

619 (a) The city council shall create by ordinance such boards, commissions, and authorities  
620 to fulfill any investigative, quasi-judicial, or quasi-legislative function the city council  
621 deems necessary and shall by ordinance establish the composition, period of existence,  
622 duties, and powers thereof.

623 (b) All members of boards, commissions, and authorities of the city shall be appointed by  
624 the city council for such terms of office and in such manner as shall be provided by  
625 ordinance, except where other appointing authority, terms of office, or manner of  
626 appointment is prescribed by this charter or by law.

627 (c) The city council by ordinance may provide for the compensation and reimbursement  
628 for actual and necessary expenses of the members of any board, commission, or authority.  
629 The city council may also by ordinance provide for liability coverage for all members of  
630 any board, commission, or authority while such members are conducting official business  
631 of the city.

632 (d) Except as otherwise provided by this charter or by law, no member of any board,  
633 commission, or authority shall hold any elective office in the city.

634 (e) Any vacancy on a board, commission, or authority of the city shall be filled for the  
635 unexpired term in the manner prescribed in this charter for original appointment, except as  
636 otherwise provided by this charter or by law.

637 (f) No member of a board, commission, or authority shall assume office until that person  
638 has executed and filed with the clerk of the city an oath obligating that person to perform  
639 faithfully and impartially the duties of that person's office; such oath shall be prescribed  
640 by ordinance and administered by the mayor.

641 (g) Any member of a board, commission, or authority may be removed from office at will  
642 by a majority vote of the members of the city council.

643 (h) Except as otherwise provided by this charter or by law, each board, commission, or  
644 authority of the city shall elect one of its members as chair and one member as vice-chair  
645 and may elect as its secretary one of its own members or may appoint as secretary an  
646 employee of the city. Each board, commission, or authority of the city government may

647 establish such bylaws, rules, and regulations, not inconsistent with this charter, ordinances  
648 of the city, or law, as it deems appropriate and necessary for the fulfillment of its duties or  
649 the conduct of its affairs. Copies of such bylaws, rules, and regulations shall be filed with  
650 the clerk of the city.

651 **SECTION 3.12.**

652 City attorney.

653 The city council shall appoint a city attorney, together with such assistant city attorneys as  
654 may be authorized, and shall provide for the payment of such attorney or attorneys for  
655 service rendered to the city. The city attorney shall be responsible for providing for the  
656 representation and defense of the city in all litigation in which the city is a party; may be the  
657 prosecuting officer in the municipal courts; shall attend the meetings of the city council as  
658 directed; shall advise the city council and other officers and employees of the city concerning  
659 legal aspects of the city's affairs; shall administer oath of office to each member of the city  
660 council, including the mayor; shall draft or review every ordinance submitted to the city  
661 council and, as a matter of course, shall sign each such ordinance indicating such drafting or  
662 review; and shall perform such other duties as may be required of the city attorney by virtue  
663 of such person's position as city attorney.

664 **SECTION 3.13.**

665 City clerk.

666 The city council shall appoint a city clerk who shall:

667 (a) Be responsible for keeping and preserving the city seal and all records of the city  
668 council;  
669 (b) Attend all meetings of the city council and keep minutes of the proceeding at such  
670 meetings;  
671 (c) Perform such other duties as may be required by the city council or the city manager;  
672 and  
673 (d) Collect taxes, licenses, fees, and other moneys belonging to the city subject to the  
674 provisions of this charter and the ordinances of the city and to enforce all laws of Georgia  
675 relating to the collection of delinquent taxes and sale or foreclosure for nonpayment of  
676 taxes by the city.

677 The city clerk may also serve as city manager if appointed as such by the city council.

678

**SECTION 3.14.**

679

City auditor.

680 The city council may appoint a city auditor to perform the duties of an accountant.

681

**SECTION 3.15.**

682

Position classification and pay plans.

683 The city clerk shall be responsible for the preparation of a position classification and pay  
684 plan which shall be submitted to the city council for approval. Such plan may apply to all  
685 employees of the city and any of its agencies, departments, boards, commissions, or  
686 authorities. When a pay plan has been adopted, the city council shall not increase or decrease  
687 the salary range applicable to any position except by amendment of such pay plan. For  
688 purposes of this section, elected and appointed city officials are not city employees. The city  
689 manager, city attorney, and city auditor shall receive such compensation as provided by the  
690 city council which appoints them to their respective offices.

691

**SECTION 3.16.**

692

Personnel policies.

693 All employees serve at will and may be removed from office at any time unless otherwise  
694 provided by ordinance. The city manager shall be responsible for the preparation of  
695 personnel policies which shall be submitted to the city council for approval. Personnel  
696 policies shall be adopted consistent with this charter concerning:

- 697 (a) The method of employee selection and probationary periods of employment;
- 698 (b) The administration of the position classification and pay plan, methods of promotion  
699 and application of service rating thereto, and transfer of employees within the classification  
700 plan;
- 701 (c) Hours of work, vacation, sick leave, and other leaves of absence, overtime pay, and the  
702 order and manner in which layoffs shall be effected;
- 703 (d) Such dismissal hearings as due process may require; and
- 704 (e) Such other personnel notices as may be necessary to provide for adequate and  
705 systematic handling of personnel affairs.

710 There shall be a court to be known as the Municipal Court of the City of Sparks.

711 **SECTION 4.11.**

712 Chief judge; associate judge.

713 (a) The municipal court shall be presided over by a chief judge and such part-time,  
714 full-time, or stand-by judges as shall be provided by ordinance.

715 (b) No person shall be qualified or eligible to serve as a judge on the municipal court  
716 unless that person shall have attained the age of 21 years and meets the qualifications  
717 provided in general law for municipal court judges. All judges shall be appointed by the  
718 city council and shall serve until a successor is appointed and qualified.

719 (c) Compensation of the judges shall be fixed by ordinance.

720 (d) Judges may be removed from office in accordance with state law.

721 (e) Before assuming office, each judge shall take an oath, given by the city clerk, that such  
722 judge will honestly and faithfully discharge the duties of the judge's office to the best of  
723 the judge's ability and without fear, favor, or partiality. The oath shall be entered in the  
724 minutes of the city council journal required in Section 2.19 of this charter.

725 **SECTION 4.12.**

726 Convening.

727 The municipal court shall be convened at regular intervals as provided by ordinance.

728 **SECTION 4.13.**

729 Jurisdiction; powers.

730 (a) The municipal court shall have jurisdiction to try and punish violations of this charter,  
731 all city ordinances, and such other violations as provided by law.

732 (b) The municipal court shall have authority to punish those in its presence for contempt,  
733 provided that such punishment shall not exceed \$300.00 or ten days in jail.

734 (c) The municipal court may fix punishment for offenses within its jurisdiction not  
735 exceeding a fine of \$1,000.00 or imprisonment for twelve months or both, or may fix

736 punishment by fine, imprisonment, or alternative sentencing, up to the maximum amount  
737 as is now and hereafter provided by law.

738 (d) The municipal court shall have authority to establish a schedule of fees to defray the  
739 cost of operations and shall be entitled to reimbursement of the cost of meals,  
740 transportation, and caretaking of prisoners bound over to superior courts for violations of  
741 state law.

742 (e) The municipal court shall have authority to establish bail and recognizance to ensure  
743 the presence of those charged with violations before such court and shall have discretionary  
744 authority to accept cash or personal or real property as surety for the appearance of persons  
745 charged with violations. Whenever any person shall give bail for that person's appearance  
746 and shall fail to appear at the time fixed for trial, that person's bond shall be forfeited by  
747 the judge presiding at such time and an execution issued thereon by serving the defendant  
748 and the defendant's sureties with a rule nisi at least two days before the hearing on the rule  
749 nisi. In the event that cash or property is accepted in lieu of bond for security for the  
750 appearance of a defendant at trial, and if such defendant fails to appear at the time and  
751 place fixed for trial, the cash so deposited shall be on order of the judge declared forfeited  
752 to the city, or the property so deposited shall have a lien against it for the value forfeited  
753 which lien shall be enforceable in the same manner and to the same extent as a lien for city  
754 property taxes.

755 (f) The municipal court shall have the same authority as superior courts to compel the  
756 production of evidence in the possession of any party; to enforce obedience to its orders,  
757 judgments, and sentences; and to administer such oaths as are necessary.

758 (g) The municipal court may compel the presence of all parties necessary to a proper  
759 disposal of each case by the issuance of summonses, subpoenas, and warrants which may  
760 be served and executed by any officer as authorized by this charter or by law.

761 (h) Each judge of the municipal court shall be authorized to issue warrants for the arrest  
762 of persons charged with offenses against any ordinance of the city, and each judge of the  
763 municipal court shall have the same authority as a magistrate of the state to issue warrants  
764 for offenses against state laws committed within the city.

765 **SECTION 4.14.**

766 Certiorari.

767 The right of certiorari from the decision and judgment of the municipal court shall exist in  
768 all criminal cases and ordinance violation cases, and such certiorari shall be obtained under  
769 the sanction of a judge of the Superior Court of Cook County under the laws of the State of  
770 Georgia regulating the granting and issuance of writs of certiorari.

771

**SECTION 4.15.**

772

Rules for court.

773 With the approval of the city council, the judge shall have full power and authority to make  
774 reasonable rules and regulations necessary and proper to secure the efficient and successful  
775 administration of the municipal court; provided, however, that the city council may adopt in  
776 part or in total the rules and regulations applicable to municipal courts. The rules and  
777 regulations made or adopted shall be filed with the city clerk, shall be available for public  
778 inspection, and upon request, a copy shall be furnished to all defendants in municipal court  
779 proceedings at least 48 hours prior to such proceedings.

780

**ARTICLE V**

781

**ELECTIONS AND REMOVAL**

782

**SECTION 5.10.**

783

Applicability of general law.

784 All elections shall be held and conducted in accordance with O.C.G.A. § 21-2-1 et seq., the  
785 "Georgia Election Code," as now or hereafter amended.

786

**SECTION 5.11.**

787

Election of the city council and mayor.

788 (a) There shall be a municipal general election held biennially in the odd years on the  
789 Tuesday next following the first Monday in November.

790 (b) The mayor and councilmembers elected to Posts 1, 2, and 3 at the general municipal  
791 election in November, 2017 shall serve for and during the four-year terms for which they  
792 were elected and until their successors are elected and qualified. The councilmembers  
793 elected to Posts 4, 5, and 6 at the general municipal election in November, 2015 shall serve  
794 for and during the four-year terms for which they were elected and until their successors  
795 are elected and qualified. Thereafter, all successors to the mayor and six councilmembers  
796 shall serve for terms of four years each and until their successors are elected and qualified,  
797 and all shall take office on the first day of January following their elections.

798

**SECTION 5.12.**

799

Nonpartisan elections.

800 Political parties shall not conduct primaries for city offices and all names of candidates for  
801 city offices shall be listed without party designations.

802

**SECTION 5.13.**

803

Election by majority vote.

804 The mayor and city council shall be elected by a majority vote of the votes cast for each  
805 position. In the event that no candidate receives a majority of the votes cast in said election,  
806 a run-off election shall be held between the candidates receiving the highest number of votes.  
807 Such run-off shall be held at the time specified by state election law.

808

**SECTION 5.14.**

809

Special elections; vacancies.

810 In the event that the office of mayor or councilmember shall become vacant for any cause  
811 whatsoever, the city council or a majority of those remaining shall order a special election  
812 to fill the balance of the unexpired term of such official; provided, however, if such vacancy  
813 occurs within twelve months of the expiration of the term of that office, the city council or  
814 a majority of those members remaining shall appoint a successor for the remainder of the  
815 term. In all other aspects, the special election shall be held and conducted in accordance with  
816 O.C.G.A. § 21-2-1 et seq., the "Georgia Election Code," as now or hereafter amended.

817

**SECTION 5.15.**

818

Other provisions.

819 Except as otherwise provided by this charter, the city council shall, by ordinance, prescribe  
820 such rules and regulations as it deems appropriate to fulfill any options and duties under  
821 O.C.G.A. § 21-2-1 et seq., the "Georgia Election Code," as now or hereafter amended.

822

**SECTION 5.16.**

823

Removal of officers.

824 (a) A councilmember, the mayor, or other appointed officers provided for in this charter  
825 shall be removed for any one or more of the causes provided in Title 45 of the O.C.G.A.  
826 or such other applicable laws.

827 (b) Removal of an officer pursuant to subsection (a) of this section shall be accomplished  
828 by one of the following methods:

829 (1) In the event an elected officer is sought to be removed by the action of the city  
830 council, such officer shall be entitled to a written notice specifying the ground or grounds  
831 for removal and to a public hearing which shall be held not less than ten days after the  
832 service of such written notice. The city council shall provide by ordinance for the manner  
833 in which such hearing shall be held. Any elected officer sought to be removed from  
834 office as provided in this section shall have the right to appeal from the decision of the  
835 city council to the Superior Court of Cook County. Such appeal shall be governed by the  
836 same rules as govern appeals to the superior court from the probate court; or  
837 (2) By an order of the Superior Court of Cook County following a hearing on a  
838 complaint seeking such removal brought by any resident of the City of Sparks.

839

**ARTICLE VI**

840

**FINANCE**

841

**SECTION 6.10.**

842

Property tax.

843 The city council may assess, levy, and collect ad valorem taxes on all real and personal  
844 property within the corporate limits of the city that is subject to such taxation as authorized  
845 by general law. This tax is for the purpose of raising revenues to defray the costs of  
846 operating the city government, of providing governmental services, for the repayment of  
847 principal and interest on general obligations, and for any other public purpose as determined  
848 by the city council in its discretion.

849

**SECTION 6.11.**

850

Millage rate; due dates; payment methods.

851 The city council by ordinance shall establish a millage rate for the city property tax, a due  
852 date, and the time period within which these taxes must be paid. The city council by

853 ordinance may provide for the payment of these taxes by installments or in one lump sum,  
854 as well as authorize voluntary payment of taxes prior to the time when due.

855 **SECTION 6.12.**

856 Occupation and business taxes.

857 The city council by ordinance shall have the power to levy such occupation or business taxes  
858 as are authorized by law. The city council may classify businesses, occupations, or  
859 professions for the purpose of such taxation in any way which may be lawful and may  
860 compel the payment of such taxes as provided in Section 6.18 of this charter.

861 **SECTION 6.13.**

862 Licenses; permits; fees.

863 The city council by ordinance shall have the power to require any individuals, businesses,  
864 practitioners, or corporations who transact business within this city to obtain a permit for  
865 such activity from the city and pay a regulatory fee for such permit as provided by general  
866 law. Such fees may reflect the total cost to the City of Sparks of regulating the activity and,  
867 if unpaid, shall be collected as provided in Section 6.18 of this charter.

868 **SECTION 6.14.**

869 Franchises.

870 (a) The city council shall have the power to grant franchises for the use of this city's streets  
871 and alleys for the purposes of railroads, street railways, telephone companies, electric  
872 companies, electric membership companies, cable television and other telecommunications  
873 companies, gas companies, transportation companies, and other similar organizations. The  
874 city council shall determine the duration, terms, whether the same shall be exclusive or  
875 nonexclusive, and the consideration for such franchises; provided, however, no franchise  
876 shall be granted for a period in excess of thirty-five years and no franchise shall be granted  
877 unless the city receives just and adequate compensation therefor. The city council shall  
878 provide for the registration of all franchises with the city clerk in a registration book kept  
879 by the city clerk. The city council may provide by ordinance for the registration within a  
880 reasonable time of all franchises previously granted.

881 (b) To the extent authorized by general law, if no franchise agreement is in effect, the city  
882 council has the authority to impose a tax on gross receipts for the use of this city's streets  
883 and alleys for the purposes of railroads, street railways, telephone companies, electric

884 companies, electric membership corporations, cable television and other  
885 telecommunications companies, gas companies, transportation companies, and other  
886 similar organizations.

887 **SECTION 6.15.**

888 Services charges.

889 The city council shall have the power to assess and collect fees, charges, and tolls for sewers,  
890 sanitary and health services, or any other services provided or made available within and  
891 outside the corporate limits of the city for the total cost to the City of Sparks of providing or  
892 making available such services. If unpaid, such charges shall be collected as provided in  
893 Section 6.18 of this charter.

894 **SECTION 6.16.**

895 Special assessments.

896 The city council by ordinance shall have the power to assess and collect the cost of  
897 constructing, reconstructing, widening, or improving any public way, street, sidewalk,  
898 curbing, gutters, sewers, or other utility mains and appurtenances from the abutting property  
899 owners under such terms and conditions as are reasonable. If unpaid, such charges shall be  
900 collected as provided in Section 6.18 of this charter.

901 **SECTION 6.17.**

902 Construction; other taxes.

903 The city shall be empowered to levy any other tax or fee allowed by law, and the specific  
904 mention of any right, power, or authority in this article shall not be construed as limiting in  
905 any way the general powers of this city to govern its local affairs.

906 **SECTION 6.18.**

907 Collection of delinquent taxes and fees.

908 The city council by ordinance may provide generally for the collection of delinquent taxes,  
909 fees, or other revenue due the city under Sections 6.10 through 6.17 of this charter by  
910 whatever reasonable means as are not precluded by law. This shall include providing for the  
911 dates when the taxes or fees are due; late penalties or interest; issuance and execution of  
912 fi.fa.'s; creation and priority of liens; making delinquent taxes and fees personal debts of the

913 persons required to pay the taxes or fees imposed; revoking city licenses for failure to pay  
914 any city taxes or fees; and providing for the assignment or transfer of tax executions.

915 **SECTION 6.19.**

916 General obligation bonds.

917 The city council shall have the power to issue bonds for the purpose of raising revenue to  
918 carry out any project, program, or venture authorized under this charter or the laws of the  
919 state. Such bonding authority shall be exercised in accordance with the laws governing bond  
920 issuance by municipalities in effect at the time such issue is undertaken.

921 **SECTION 6.20.**

922 Revenue bonds.

923 Revenue bonds may be issued by the city council as state law provides. Such bonds are to  
924 be paid out of any revenue produced by the project, program, or venue for which they were  
925 issued.

926 **SECTION 6.21.**

927 Short-term loans.

928 The city may obtain short-term loans and must repay such loans not later than December 31  
929 of each year, unless otherwise provided by law.

930 **SECTION 6.22.**

931 Lease-purchase contracts.

932 The city may enter into multiyear lease, purchase, or lease-purchase contracts for the  
933 acquisition of goods, materials, real and personal property, services, and supplies, provided  
934 the contract terminates without further obligation on the part of the municipality at the close  
935 of the calendar year in which it was executed and at the close of each succeeding calendar  
936 year for which it may be renewed. Contracts must be executed in accordance with the  
937 requirements of Code Section 36-60-13 of the O.C.G.A., or other such applicable law as are  
938 or may hereafter be enacted.

939

**SECTION 6.23.**

940

Fiscal year.

941 The city council shall set the fiscal year by ordinance. This fiscal year shall constitute the  
942 budget year and the year for financial accounting and reporting of each and every office,  
943 department, agency, and activity of the city government.

944

**SECTION 6.24.**

945

Budget ordinance.

946 The city council shall provide an ordinance on the procedures and requirements for the  
947 preparation and execution of an annual operating budget, a capital improvement plan, and  
948 a capital budget, including requirements as to the scope, content, and form of such budgets  
949 and plans. The city council shall also comply with the budgeting and auditing provisions of  
950 Chapter 81 of Title 36 of the O.C.G.A.

951

**SECTION 6.25.**

952

Operating budget.

953 On or before the date fixed by the city council but not later than fifteen days prior to the  
954 beginning of each fiscal year, the city manager shall submit to the city council a proposed  
955 operating budget for the ensuing fiscal year. The budget shall be accompanied by a message  
956 from the city manager containing a statement of general fiscal policies of the city, the  
957 important features of the budget, explanations of major changes recommended for the next  
958 fiscal year, a general summary of the budget, and such other comments and information as  
959 the city manager may deem pertinent. The operating budget and the capital budget provided  
960 for in Section 6.29 of this charter, the budget message, and all supporting documents shall  
961 be filed in the office of the city clerk and shall be open to public inspection.

962

**SECTION 6.26.**

963

Action by city council on budget.

964 (a) The city council may amend the operating budget proposed by the city manager, except  
965 that the budget as finally amended and adopted must provide for all expenditures required  
966 by state law or by other provisions of this charter and for all debt service requirements for  
967 the ensuing fiscal year. The total appropriations from any fund shall not exceed the  
968 estimated fund balance, reserves, and revenues.

969 (b) The city council by ordinance shall adopt the final operating budget for the ensuing  
970 fiscal year not later than May 15 of each year. If the city council fails to adopt the budget  
971 by said date, the amounts appropriated for operation of the then current fiscal year shall be  
972 deemed adopted for the ensuing fiscal year on a month-to-month basis, with all items  
973 prorated accordingly, until such time as the city council adopts a budget for the ensuing  
974 fiscal year. Adoption of the budget shall take the form of an appropriations ordinance  
975 setting out the estimated revenues in detail by sources and making appropriations according  
976 to fund and by organizational unit, purpose, or activity as set out in the budget preparation  
977 ordinance adopted pursuant to Section 6.24 of this charter.

978 (c) The amount set out in the adopted operating budget for each organizational unit shall  
979 constitute the annual appropriation for such, and no expenditure shall be made or  
980 encumbrance created in excess of the otherwise unencumbered balance of the  
981 appropriations or allotment thereof to which it is chargeable.

982 **SECTION 6.27.**

983 Levy of taxes.

984 The city council shall levy by ordinance such taxes as are necessary. The taxes and tax rates  
985 set by such ordinance shall be such that reasonable estimates of revenues from such levy  
986 shall at least be sufficient, together with other anticipated revenues, fund balances, and  
987 applicable reserves, to equal the total amount appropriated for each of the several funds set  
988 forth in the annual operating budget for defraying the expenses of the general government  
989 of this city.

990 **SECTION 6.28.**

991 Changes in appropriations.

992 The city council by ordinance may make changes in the appropriations contained in the  
993 current operating budget at any regular meeting or special or emergency meeting called for  
994 such purpose, but any additional appropriations may be made only from an existing  
995 unexpended surplus.

996 **SECTION 6.29.**

997 Capital improvements.

998 (a) On or before the date fixed by the city council, but not later than thirty days prior to the  
999 beginning of each fiscal year, the councilmembers shall consider a capital improvements

1000 plan with a recommended capital budget containing the means of financing the  
1001 improvements proposed for the ensuing fiscal year.

1002 (b) The city council shall adopt by ordinance the final capital budget for the ensuing fiscal  
1003 year not later than March 15 of each year. No appropriation provided for in a prior capital  
1004 budget shall lapse until the purpose for which the appropriation was made shall have been  
1005 accomplished or abandoned; provided, however, the city manager may submit amendments  
1006 to the capital budget at any time during the fiscal year, accompanied by recommendations.  
1007 Any such amendments to the capital budget shall become effective only upon adoption by  
1008 ordinance.

1009 **SECTION 6.30.**

1010 Audits.

1011 There shall be an annual independent audit of all city accounts, funds, and financial  
1012 transactions by a certified public accountant selected by the city council. The audit shall be  
1013 conducted according to generally accepted auditing principles. Any audit of any funds by  
1014 the state or federal governments may be accepted as satisfying the requirements of this  
1015 charter. Copies of annual audit reports shall be available at printing costs to the public.

1016 **SECTION 6.31.**

1017 Contracts.

1018 The city manager shall examine all proposed contracts to which the City of Sparks may be  
1019 a party and shall prepare for the mayor's signature any contract authorized by the city  
1020 council. No contract with the city shall be binding on the city unless:

1021 (a) It is in writing;  
1022 (b) It is drawn by or submitted and reviewed by the city attorney and, as a matter of  
1023 course, is signed by the city attorney to indicate such drafting or review; and  
1024 (c) It is made or authorized by the city council and such approval is entered in the city  
1025 council journal of proceedings pursuant to Section 2.19 of this charter.

1026 **SECTION 6.32.**

1027 Purchasing.

1028 The city council shall by ordinance prescribe procedures for a system of centralized  
1029 purchasing for the city.



1058 or cases shall be completed by such city agencies, personnel, or offices as may be provided  
1059 by the city council.

1060 **SECTION 7.14.**

1061 Definitions and construction.

1062 (a) Section captions in this charter are informative only and shall not be considered as a  
1063 part thereof.

1064 (b) The word "shall" is mandatory and the word "may" is permissive.

1065 (c) The singular shall include the plural, the masculine shall include the feminine, and vice  
1066 versa.

1067 (d) Except as specifically provided otherwise by this charter, the terms "city council" and  
1068 "councilmember" mean the members of the city council.

1069 **SECTION 7.15.**

1070 Responsibility for prior obligations and specific repealer.

1071 The City of Sparks is hereby made responsible as a corporate body for all legal debts,  
1072 contracts and obligations for which the City of Sparks, as incorporated under an Act  
1073 approved December 20, 1899 (Ga. Laws 1899, p. 271), as amended (the "Prior Act"), is now  
1074 obligated. The Prior Act is hereby repealed in its entirety.

1075 **SECTION 7.16.**

1076 General repealer.

1077 All laws and parts of laws in conflict with this charter are repealed.